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Does the Pragmatist Reflection on the Ethical and Aesthetic Values Need the Kantian Axiology for its (Pragmatist) Future Developments?

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1. Introduction

The philosophy of values, or axiology, or value inquiry does not belong to the main fields of philosophical interest for American pragmatists. At least in comparison to Baden neo-Kantianism, Roman Ingarden's phenomenology, Henryk Elzenberg's axiology and others that once constituted my own philosophical background. Yet the terms "value", "e/valuation", "worth/y", and similar ones are important for many pragmatists—mostly perhaps for Nicolas Rescher, who equates the term "Homo sapiens" with "Homo valuens" (Rescher 1993, 246), for Hugh McDonald's "Radical Axiology" (McDonald 2004), and, to some extent, for John Dewey in *Theory of Valuation*, in which he writes that "all deliberate, all planned human conduct, personal and collective, seems to be influenced, if not controlled, by estimates of value or worth of ends to be attained" (Dewey 1939, 2). In addition to that, some pragmatists see values as more important when related to normativity; for Joseph Margolis, norms are exemplary values (cf. Margolis 1995, 265), and Alain Locke links values not only with norms of preference but also with imperatives of actions (cf. Locke 1968 [1935], 313–4).

For these and other reasons, it would be good to take a look at the term "value" as a keyword by means of which we can see the pragmatists' efforts to meet the practical, not merely theoretical, challenges that appear on the horizon. Let me explain at the beginning that I do not share with some other, both non-pragmatist and pragmatist authors, too much hope as to the role of axiology as such in the practice of the social life. For example, John Laird hoped that "Value *may* prove to be the key that will eventually release all the human sciences from their present position of pathetic, if not dignified, futility" (Laird 1929, xix). Locke has wished to make the philosophy of values American philosophy's strong point, "an American forte" (Locke 1968 [1935], 317). I do not, let me repeat, share with these authors such hopes, although I do not deny some justification for their (and others') expectations. Nevertheless, I think that this category (value) is so widely used, and sometimes in many important contexts of the public life, that I just want to employ it and see how much it is helpful in the recognition of new perspectives.

To be sure, one can hardly talk about one pragmatist axiology understood as a more or less coherent set of assumptions, methods, and theories. C.S. Peirce's idea of valuations in the normative sciences (aesthetics, ethics, and logic) is different than Dewey's theory of valuation, and Richard Shusterman's idea of "somaesthetics", although all three link, in different ways, the field of ethics (and ethical values) with the field of aesthetics (and aesthetic values). Thomas Alexander's idea of the "aesthetics of human existence" (*The Human Eros*) covers both ethics and aesthetics (and more) in the task of exploring meaning and value of our lives. C. I. Lewis (in *Values and Imperatives: Studies in Ethics*), J. Margolis ("Values, Norms, and Agents") and Rescher (*Value Matters*) devoted their attention to the normative and imperative dimension of moral values, which is in line with a more general tendency to see "value inquiry" predominantly in the area of ethics and ethical values, not aesthetics. Richard Rorty ("Solidarity or Objectivity") shares with William James, J. Dewey, and G.H. Mead many inspirations on the social dimension of the world of values, yet it would be more appropriate to talk about his reflections that are applicable to the discussion about values, rather than any theory that he has put forward. Also John Lachs ("Relativism and its Benefits") takes much from Dewey, although he predominantly develops George Santayana's views on the relativism of values, and, having "learned to write without footnotes" (Lachs 2012,191), he uses the language that is more colloquial or popular rather than theoretical and scientific, as if directed to wider audiences, not just to scholars.

But seeing the philosophical task as wider than a theoretical inquiry does not, by any means, have to be a failure or a mistake. Much depends upon the particular audience that the philosophical message is directed at. Actually, it is one of pragmatism's strengths to propose the criticism of culture along with the interpretations of various cultural phenomena that are interesting for more general audiences—including irrational audiences. I mean those that ignore many parts of rational argumentation in many areas of living in favour of emotional, symbolic, visual, and others—and touch more general and practical issues than strictly philosophical and theoretical.

2. New challenges and possible future developments

There are very many challenges ahead (of which I shall just mention without any intention to develop this plot in the present text) that pragmatism, understood predominantly as a social philosophy and the critique of culture, is going to face. The role of the mass-media that cover nearly all aspects of our life, including private and public, is one of them. Yet it is not the mass-media as such that I want to discuss at this time, but rather the growing role of the aesthetic in various spheres of public life, starting with communication (the pictorial dimension of the TV and Internet narratives), through the omnipresent images in omnipresent commercials, the promotion of different life-styles, ending with particular argumentations on vital issues that seem to dominate public discussions. For example: does not the anti-abortion discourse (frequently referring to "evil" and "negative value/s") gain much among many audiences when its proponents use X-ray images of the foetus as a part of their story? On the other hand, are not their pro-abortion opponents much more persuasive to many audiences when their narratives (frequently referring to "freedom", "non-suffering", and other "positive values") use the images of the deformed newborns with terrible-looking physical birth defects? Do not the TV scenes play a big role in the discussion about the refugees or immigrants, and do not these scenes (a dead baby boy on a beach for one party and, for the other, terrorist attacks by Muslim immigrants), rather than arguments, matter in the public life, the political elections included? Are not the discourses on nationalisms and anti-nationalisms strengthened by symbols and well-arranged visual images that appeal to the senses and the imagination rather than to reason? I mean, is it not the case that, even when the disputants themselves avoid using images, a growing majority

of the public have them already in their minds, and very often react to these images no less than to the argumentation which they hear, if they hear it at all?

The challenge for philosophers that emerges out of it, in my view, is the need to link *the message on ethical values* with *the aesthetic values of the narratives and within them*. If philosophers want to have a say on the important issues of the day, and this includes values, they should pay much more attention to the aesthetic dimension of their message that is directed to various audiences. I do not want to promote any psychological impact on the viewers or the superficial effects that can be acceptable for the massive audience. At stake is the rational means by which the debate concerning values should be conducted.

I can find strong support for my claim with both Kantians and the pragmatists. On the one hand, Wilhelm Windelband, one hundred years ago, put strong emphasis on what he “considered the truth”, namely, that “it is not so much the difficulty of philosophy as the poor literary standard of philosophical writers which perplexes the student” (Windelband 1921 [1914], 15). Hence, philosophers ought to, among other things, pay more attention to “the finer quality of the artistic expression” (ibid., 16) of their works and ideas to make these works and ideas more pronounced. Another thinker, originally coming from the Kantian tradition, Hugo Münsterberg (his *Eternal Values*, written in the spirit of neo-Kantian axiology, will be referred to frequently in this text), the author of one of the first books on what we call nowadays “cinematic philosophy” (*The Photoplay*, 1916), stressed the interconnection between the world of values and the aesthetic components of film that refer to these values and enhance the message in them. On the other hand, if we agree with Rescher that the cardinal rule of pragmatic rationality is to “Proceed in a manner that is optimally efficient and effective in realizing the purposes at hand” (Rescher 2004, 95), my question then becomes as follows: do not more *attractive* and *clearer* and more *inspirational* discourses make for more “efficient and effective” realization of “the purposes at hand”? Those contemporary pragmatists who want to use the legacy of the great classical pragmatists, while also looking for future challenges with the help of their ideas, should try to respond to this.

To be sure, for pragmatists (especially neopragmatists), there are some reasons why a complete separation of ethical values from aesthetic values may not work. First, it is through the imaginative origin of ethical ideals that Dewey could claim that “art is more moral than the moralities”

(Dewey 1934, 348); second, the inevitably narrative character of the articulation of ethical ideals (any narrative being at least partially aesthetic); third, the artificiality of the compartmentalization of ethics and aesthetics (and other spheres) as well as the conventionality of the borderlines between morality and the arts; fourth, the idea of the art of living, or “the ethical art of fashioning one’s life” (Shusterman 1992, 59); fifth, the criticism of the classic separation of body and mind, resulting in the approval of corporal sensitivity and bodily perception in shaping the mental and linguistic dimensions of such notions as: duty, obligation, and normativity.

On the other hand, the discussion about the aesthetic and visual aspects of the ethical and textual messages cannot avoid, at least for a brief moment, cinematic philosophy. It is strange, at least to me, that the greatest of American social pragmatists, Dewey and Rorty, living in the country in which cinematic culture has been so essential, have devoted to film almost no philosophical attention. In the case of Dewey, perhaps, it was caused by his distance to the commercial dimension of the films he saw in America on the one hand, and, on the other hand, his disdain of the propaganda films made by the Nazis and the Communists. In the case of Rorty, perhaps, his attention to “the great books” obscured the role of “the great films”, yet he admitted that “the novel, the movie, and the TV program have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress” (Rorty 1989, xvi). No less surprising (in the positive sense of this word) is Hugo Münsterberg’s fascination with the philosophical potential that movies possess, given the very early stage of the film industry he witnessed. As already mentioned, he wrote, as early as 1916, one of the first books on cinematic philosophy ever, having been impressed by early American films that he watched upon his arrival to the us. For him, film was a very efficient tool for the filmmaker to impress the audiences and evoke an aesthetic experience in them. He recognized the culturally and philosophically significant instruments that film specifically possesses and which other fine arts do not have, the “manipulation” of time and space as well as the stimulation of imagination. Film, seen as art, is not imitative; although it refers to reality, its main aim is to instigate aesthetic experience, and this can include, as in the case of most eminent works of film art, a reference to values: “a faith in ideals and eternal values must permeate the world of the screen” (Münsterberg 1916, 228). Whereas Dewey wanted to show the interconnection between valuations and the processes of art creation,

Münsterberg claimed that the condition of aesthetic experience is the separation, if not isolation, of the artwork so as to see the value of the objects as if from a distance. Film has unique possibilities to make this happen: “the greatest mission which the photoplay may have in our community is that of esthetic cultivation. No art reaches a larger audience daily, no esthetic influence finds spectators in a more receptive frame of mind” (ibid., 228–9). What a message, in my view, to the philosophers living in time when clips, videos, and films play a role in shaping the cultural policy!

Allow me to add, furthermore, that the present text does not examine Kant’s claim (cf. Kant 1911 [1790], 228) that the beautiful gives us no knowledge about the object (about the values, in the present context)—something that some neopragmatists would like to claim. Nor do I examine the ontological issues of the *kalokagathia*-type of approaches, that interpret values from the aesthetic and the ethical viewpoints at the same time, both in the Kantian tradition and the pragmatist traditions. Hence, on the one hand, H. R. Lotze states that if our minds’ attempts to explain the world of values correspond to creative imagination, “then *Practical Reason* stands on a line with the artistic production of beauty” (Lotze 1885 [1856–1864], 246). On the other hand, Dewey writes that great moral deeds may have the grace or nobility that strike us (cf. 1991 [1938], 358); for my part, I cannot prejudge, at least not here, whether the aesthetic components of the narratives, as such, *necessarily* modify the message on ethical values. Finally, Rescher talks about “aesthetic parameters” in scientific explanations, and to these he includes: “*simplicity, uniformity, symmetry, economy, elegance, and the like*” (Rescher 1990, 1). He adds: “The approach agrees with Kant in viewing all the parameters of scientific systematicity—simplicity, uniformity, coherence, and the rest—as methodological and procedural guidelines (“regulative principles”)” (ibid., 2). He also explains that “while our commitment to the ‘aesthetic’ parameters of inductive procedure should be viewed in the first instance as a matter of methodological convenience within the overall economy of rational inquiry, nevertheless, our reliance on them is not *totally* devoid of ontological commitments regarding the world’s nature” (ibid., 9). If we wanted to follow Rescher, it would mean that not only the aesthetic factors should be central in the narratives about ethical messages, but also that they should be seen as hardly separable from the scientific explanation of some ethical and axiological phenomena. Here, as Rescher suggests, the pragmatists and the Kantians would not necessarily be in disagreement.

3. The thesis of the present text: any ethical message needs aesthetic narratives

- In order to more effectively face the challenges of the pictorial turn and visual culture today, it is quite necessary to refer to aesthetic values (e.g., clarity, simplicity, attractiveness, excellence, style, uniqueness, originality, stimulation, inspiration, provocation/shock or elegance/gentleness, and many others) by means of the aesthetic modes of expression (textual, oral, pictorial, visual, cinematic, etc.) in the philosophical narratives that deal with ethical values, be they social or individual.

I am thinking here about ethical values and aesthetic values at the same time as, for example, in the case of the visual *attractiveness*, narrative *clearness*, and *inspirational* contents for a moral or ethical message in philosophy (if we agree that *attractiveness*, *clarity*, and *inspiration* belong predominantly to the aesthetic domain).

The auxiliary thesis of the present text, one saying that Kantian axiology can, at some points, be helpful, should be formulated in the following way:

- The pragmatist tradition is strong and rich enough to face new challenges; nevertheless, it would be interesting to see if it could use and profit from other philosophical traditions, and this includes the Kantian tradition, one that has, at some point, enormously helped to develop axiology as a philosophical discipline.

Let me add that this present text has been written in hope that, if the contemporary pragmatists would like, as they frequently do, to develop and update the philosophical and axiological message of their classical teachers and mentors, they might also think about the stimulations these authoritative figures experienced, or may have experienced from Kantians. In this way, the future developments of the pragmatist reflection on values could become more expansive.

4. Who is pragmatist and who is Kantian on values?

The usage of the terms “Kantian” and “pragmatist” needs clarification. To be sure, it is neither easy to indicate the most representative authors of the “pragmatist axiology” (Peirce? Dewey and Mead? Lewis? Rorty?) on

the one hand, and of the “Kantian axiology” on the other (Kant himself? Lotze? Münsterberg? Windelband and Rickert? Scheler and N. Hartmann?); nor is it easy to indicate the most representative assumptions of these two philosophical traditions. Nevertheless, I want to clarify what I mean by “pragmatist” and “Kantian” in this text. I assume, at least for the sake of the present project, that “pragmatist” and “Kantian” mean all of the following ten features taken together.

Firstly, pragmatism is predominantly a *social philosophy*, and Kantianism is predominantly a *metaphysical philosophy*. I do not want to claim that these two (i.e. social and metaphysical) are mutually exclusive. I want to say that the former means that pragmatism emphasizes the social relations as the most constituent factors that shape the realm of values, the processes of evaluation, of setting norms, and of generating discourses by means of which axiological issues can be articulated. The latter means that Kantianism studies predominantly the ontological status of values, assumes the absolute and objective character of some of them, and examines their possible normative character. This refers to Kant himself. Patrick Hutchings, in his book *Kant on Absolute Values*, notices that, in Kant, the understanding of the personal values needs the background and the context of the metaphysics of morals: “The particular metaphysics must at least be noticed before we appropriate the notion of personal value for our own contemporary uses” (Hutchings 1972, 62). And it is within this metaphysics, Hutchings continues, that the worth of man can be justified in Kant; “Whether or not we choose to fix our happiness in it, this ineluctable value, this immanent worth of a will willing, is the only sub-lunary ontological necessity, and the only thing that cannot fail us [...]”. Kant simply elevates immanent, indeprivable, ineluctable worth to the first place on this teleological scale, and to the first place on his axiological scale as well (*ibid.*, 70).

Most pragmatists reject the absolute and unconditioned values, and some of them even attempted to “convert” or “translate” Kantian thought into social terms, like G.H. Mead, who wrote openly that Kant’s categorical imperative can be “given its social equivalent” (Mead 1934, 379). I say “most pragmatists” because the positions held by Peirce, Royce, and Rescher are, to some degree and at some points, closer (yet, not identical!) to the representatives of the Kantian tradition.

Secondly, pragmatism, more often than not, *contextualizes* the assessments of valuable deeds, actions, and states of affairs. Pragmatism does not recognize, as Kantianism usually does, the “*unconditioned*” states of

affairs, “things in themselves”, “inner worth”, and absolute values that are, so to say, “valid” even despite having no reference to many people’s needs, preferences, interests, and hopes. The Kantian positions usually follow Kant’s own *Groundwork*’s claim that the full worth of good will is like a “jewel in itself” (Kant 2002 [1785], 10).

Thirdly, pragmatism is predominantly *consequentialist* in the sense of a practical application of values amidst the social life and the consequences to be derived thereby, while Kantianism is predominantly *deontological*, which means that “The moral worth of the action thus lies not in the effect to be expected from it” (Kant 2002 [1785], 16). The consequentialist character of the pragmatist position can include preferences, not merely the effects of the action: “Value reactions guided by emotional preferences and affinities are as potent in the determination of attitudes as pragmatic consequences are in the determination of actions. In the generic and best sense of the term ‘pragmatic’, it is important to take stock of the one as the other” (Locke 1968 [1935], 318). Kantianism includes the deontological dimension (the very intention to obey the duty) and the teleological one (the very intention to realize a given value or a valuable state of affairs), though the teleological approach may assume a consequentialist colouring when the result (i.e. realization) is seen as the main or most important aim of the project.

Fourthly, pragmatism is basically *naturalistic* and Kantianism is basically *idealistic*; pragmatists assume that the knowledge about the world of values can be had by such disciplines as physics, chemistry, biology, anthropology, ethics, and social sciences. The Kantians assume, to use Münsterberg’s words, that “the pragmatists [are] wrong” and that Kantians “may stand firmly with both feet on the rock of facts, and may yet hold to the absolute values as eternally belonging to the structure of the world” (Münsterberg 1909, 2).

Fifthly, although ontologically monistic (all values have a naturalistic character), pragmatism has a tendency towards axiological *pluralism* by stressing the important social role of the variety of values (e. g., activity, tolerance, freedom, etc). Kantianism is ontologically *dualistic* (absolute and objective values are different in status and character than the relative and subjective values) and typologically dualistic in the sense of cultivating the classic division into basic values: good vs. evil; the beautiful vs. ugly, etc. in the first place.

Sixthly, pragmatism is more *evolutionary* in its understanding of values and the amelioration of the social world by working on still better relations

amongst people, and Kantianism has a rather *static*, eternal, and fixed idea of the absolute and of objective values as the main groundwork for dignity and justice. It does not mean that the Kantians reject an evolutionary or incremental approach toward values in general. Heinrich Rickert, one of the leading Baden neo-Kantians, was a follower of the idea of the progress in culture and social sciences. However, he and other Kantians seem to rely on the eternally fixed and, in this way, non-evolutionary standards of values: "Only when such timelessly valid formal values are found will it be possible to relate them to the plenitude of empirically detectable values actually developed in history" (Rickert 1924, 118).

Seventhly, pragmatism does not necessarily link values with duties and obligations to realize given values. This link is clearly visible and the idea of *Seinsollen* that was strong in the Kantian tradition (and later on in the phenomenology of Scheler, N. Hartmann, and others). For the Baden Kantians, the idea of obligation was axial in their struggle against the axiological relativism, and in at least in this service "the conception of obligation is excellent" (Münsterberg 1909, 57).

Eighthly, pragmatism is *anthropocentric* whereas Kantianism, especially Baden neo-Kantianism (and some part of phenomenology later on) is *axiocentric*. The difference was tersely articulated by Josiah Royce, one of the founding fathers of pragmatism yet himself claiming to belong to "the wide realm of Post-Kantian Idealism" (Royce 1885, ix). He wrote that the cause "does not get its value merely from your being pleased with it. You believe, on the contrary, that you love it just because of its own value, which it has by itself, even if you die. That is just why one may be ready to die for his cause" (Royce 1995, 11). At this very point, Royce's message is close (yet not identical!) to the neo-Kantians' (cf. Münsterberg 1909, 64).

Ninthly, pragmatism's primary explanatory powers lie in the *empirical* methodologies of the social sciences that are experimentally verifiable rather than in *aprioristic* groundwork for knowledge. Windelband tersely articulated the Kantian methodology in the following way: "No knowledge of duty can be put into action without a knowledge of being" (Windelband 1921 [1914], 30).

Tenthly, pragmatism, especially neopragmatism is aware of the contingency of *discourses* about values and valuations. Rorty's descriptive relativism is the view according to which "the truth (or falsity) of a belief (or set of beliefs) is dependent on the relation of the belief(s) to some discourse (whatever else it is dependent on). Truth (or falsity) of belief(s) holds only with respect to, or in relation to some discourse, and need not

hold with respect to other discourses” (Cahoone 1991, 239). Kantianism does not seem to stress that our understanding of the realm of values is very much dependent upon the discourses of, or rather about this realm; rather, it stresses the need to get to the *right* and *reliable* discourse out of many false and unreliable discourses at hand. So, whereas a Kantian might say that the progress in the explanation of the world (of values) “is therefore at the same time a progress in the description” (Münsterberg 1909, 131), by no means does it mean that the plurality of alternative descriptions is taken legitimately from various, more or less, equally valid standpoints.

5. Why should the pragmatists look to the Kantians at all?

Despite the sometimes harsh criticism of pragmatists directed at Kant (and the Kantians), for example, for ignoring the social dimension of their ideas, and the no less harsh criticism of the Kantians against pragmatism, for example, for promoting relativism, studying these relationships in the context of the idea of value can be interesting and fruitful. Below, I propose a few issues that could be taken into consideration—if not already having been taken into consideration—in the pragmatists’ reflections on values. All these points can, I claim, be instrumental in answering the question that was put in the title of this text.

5.1 The Kantians can help the pragmatists better define their philosophy of values

I have the impression that the Kantians have already given service to at least some pragmatists in their (pragmatists’) better setting of their own philosophical and axiological identity. Directly or indirectly rejecting some Kantian views and fortifying others, a more or less definite character of pragmatist axiology has been proposed sometimes as if against the Kantian background. What background? Münsterberg presented tersely the dilemma that has faced a major part of the Kantian axiology. Namely, “we have a world with over-personal unconditional values or we have no real world at all, but merely a worthless chance dream, in which to strive for truth and morality can have no meaning whatsoever” (Münsterberg 1909, 46). As if in response to that, Dewey’s *Theory of Valuation*, one of the most representative texts for pragmatist axiology, clearly states that the problem of values and valuation refers to exclusively “human activities

and human relations”, to “the behavioral relations of persons to one another”, and that values have a “social or interpersonal” character (Dewey 1939; 3, 11, 12). This can be seen as an obvious statement that situates pragmatism within the realm of social relations as opposed to a relation to some over-human reality. Exactly the same statement was put forward by Rorty in “Solidarity or Objectivity”; as if, again, responding to the Kantian divide, he juxtaposed those who “describe themselves as standing in immediate relation to a non-human reality” vs. those “telling the story of their contribution to a community” (Rorty 1991, 21). Of course, I am not claiming that these authors replied directly to the Kantians; I just claim that their replies can be used in the pragmatists’ replies to the Kantian divide and more clearly establish the pragmatist axiological position.

How can it be helpful in answering the question that is put forward in the title of the present text? In confronting the Kantian axiology with respect to most of the vital points (ontological, epistemological, and others), the pragmatists can better articulate their views on the social origin and the communal character of the world of values. As a consequence, they should be able to better understand the undercurrents of social changes and more adequately react to particular needs, including the communicative needs, of the members of the public. At least since James’s works (such as, for example, “The Social Value of the College-Bred”, 1907), the pragmatist reflection on values and axiological themes has already been much more sensitive and responsive to the problems of particular communities and their members’ developments. In my view, it should continue to be such.

5.2 The Kantians can, by *via negativa*, help the pragmatists better define target audiences

In response to the philosophical and ethical question: “What should be done?”, some Kantians have followed the idea that “We are not forced to act in accordance with a value, but we ought to act in accordance with it. The value is thus an obligation” (Münsterberg 1909, 51). Contrary to this, pragmatists have proposed, among other things, meliorism as a way towards the improvement of the quality of social life, of the cooperation of the members of the public, and of the self-creation of these members. To use Dewey’s definition from *Reconstruction in Philosophy*: “Meliorism is the belief that the specific conditions which exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or comparatively good, in any event may be bettered”

(Dewey 1988 [1920], 181–2). This means, among other things, the recognition of these specific conditions and the possible ways of amendment according to the particular potentialities to be evoked in a given place and context.

Without going into much detail about the differences between these two ways, we can say that, here, the Kantians can be helpful and inspirational in a negative way, as a sort of warning for the pragmatists not to ignore the social dimension of talking about values as well as about norms and obligations. According to the pragmatist interpretation, both Kant and the Kantians failed to adequately refer to the social reality and the changeable communal challenges. To use Shusterman's strong words, "the social and class-hierarchical foundation of aesthetic judgment" (Shusterman 1989, 211) has been "scandalously" neglected in Kant, and it seems that this scandalous neglect has been transmitted to the major part of the Kantian tradition. However, this neglect can be seen as a kind of potential inspiration for the pragmatists in various ways nowadays. In the first instance, in their dealing with the social aspects of values, valuations, and the narratives that are used in social communication, my claim is that the pragmatists, in their melioristic efforts, should be aware of something that Kant himself and the Kantians in general were not aware of, and that is of the different social, political, cultural, and economic statuses of the audiences as well as the philosophical and communicative consequences. One of these consequences is the contextualization of the messages *and* the contextualization of the modes of transmitting these messages. In order to be able persuasively to talk to many audiences, not just the academic one (as is usually the case when philosophers address their texts and lectures)—or, to use Kant's language (in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*), "the more cultured section of the community"—the recognition of these modes with the values (including aesthetic values that are present in the narratives) should be one of the priorities. Pragmatist pluralism and tolerance make it possible also to reach and persuade various segments of (to use Kant's language again) "the ruder section of the community", whatever this may mean in our contemporary context.

So the answer to the title question of the present text, at this point, should go in the direction of the recognition of various modes of communication, modes that include, for example, the different sensitivities of audiences to the ways in which given communication is transmitted. The pragmatists' recognition of the language and values of mass-culture (e.g. Shusterman's studies of the culture of rap and hip-hop) may serve as an encouraging example.

5.3 Kantians' meaningful life vs. pragmatists' satisfying life in the context of the values-norms relationship

The Baden neo-Kantian Windelband was among the first and most influential scholars who saw values also in the context of the objective norms that should be realized. The basic idea was that the norms indicate that the particular valuable state of affairs ought to be realized when possible. In this way, the phrase that is uttered before the act of the realization, namely: "something should take place", corresponds to the phrase that is uttered after the act of the realization, namely: "it is good/valuable that something has taken place". With or without any direct reference to the Kantian ideas, at least some pragmatists wrestled with the problem of whether a valuable state of affairs should be seen as a standard or a norm that ought to be materialized if/when possible. Some of these efforts resemble, if not correspond to, the Kantians' struggle. For example, Dewey states that "Value in the sense of *good* is inherently connected with that which promotes, furthers, assists, a course of activity, and value in the sense of *right* is inherently connected with that which is needed, required, in the maintenance of a course of activity" (Dewey 1939, 57). Margolis also links values with norms: "*norms* are exemplary values in a hierarchy of values, or principles or rules or regulative procedures for 'grading' and 'ranking' things—preeminently, choices, judgments, commitments, actions—pertinent to realizing such values" (Margolis 1995, 265). Lachs, intending to apply philosophy into practice in a direct manner, sees philosophers as those who have obligations to live exemplary lives (cf. Lachs 2014, 394); this means, among other things, that philosophers ought to give their students as well as the other members of the public living pictures of a good life in practice. Philosophers should be able to experience in practice the ideas of the good life, and be ready to share them with the people around them: "Philosophers ought to know better, speak better, and act better" (Lachs 2015, 7).

I cannot here discuss the consequences of the ambiguity of the term "norm", or whether it should be understood as "a social standard" and, if so, the social standard of which particular society and/or community. Perhaps, it should mean the "ideal" to be realized in certain circumstances, or, rather, a recommended way of performing an action according to certain criteria. However, it may seem that, if the pragmatists narrow down the world of values to the social sphere, then human exemplars, with their successful realizations of a good life, can serve us as models of the good life

to be discussed and promoted by means of attractive narratives. After all, we need some models, real exemplars, of the good and meaningful life to be transmitted—attractively, clearly, and inspirationally—to members of the public. Can Lachs' view fortify our discussion on the meaningful life? Rescher elaborates on the relationship between pragmatism and the Kantian type of idealism in terms of "satisfaction" and "meaning". In the chapter "The Pragmatic Aspect of Values and the Idealistic Dimensions of Values", he says that "The pragmatic aspect of values lies in the fact that they provide a thought tool that we require in order to achieve a *satisfying life*. By contrast, the idealistic aspect of values lies in the fact that they alone enable us to achieve a *meaningful life*" (Rescher 1993, 248), and adds that "It is our dedication to values that ultimately gives meaning to our lives" (ibid., 249). But what is a meaningful life? Aren't the pragmatists able to provide it with their social philosophy? And aren't the pragmatists able to provide it with reference to the realization of values, both social and individual? I am looking for the answer to this question in Münsterberg, who, one hundred years ago, accused the pragmatists he knew from Harvard of being unable to articulate a meaningful life in their philosophical message. He wrote that, although the efficiency of settling life problems has grown thanks to, among other things, the pragmatist approach towards life and philosophy, the meaning of life is in danger (cf. Münsterberg 1909, 4–5, 77). Surprisingly (to me), Münsterberg has said exactly the same as what Rescher wrote about a century later. He (Münsterberg) expressed his hope that, if a new philosophy should appear and give "meaning to life and reality, and liberate us from the pseudo-philosophic doubt of our ideals [...] the problem of values must stand in the centre of the inquiry" (Münsterberg 1909, 4–5), and Kantian philosophy can provide us with it much more than the pragmatist. What they both wanted to say, I think, is the following: pay attention to the difficulty of having a good life with reference to merely individual preferences, and even to the dedication to the communal affairs, and this because both lead to axiological subjectivism and relativism. In the Kantian tradition (as in the Platonic, Scholastic, and others) subjectivism and relativism are definitely not enough to make life meaningful.

Without getting into much detail about the possible rhetorical effects of the Kantians' one-sided criticism of the social pragmatism, one can say that, perhaps, the pragmatists need Kantians at least to rethink the formulations of the good life within pragmatism. Rescher claims that "Being human involves a commitment to ideality—a striving toward something

larger and better than life. *Homo sapiens* is a creature that yearns for transcendence, for achieving value and meaning above and beyond the buzzing confusion of the world's realities" (Rescher 1993, 249).

I think that the pragmatists should evoke this theme in their philosophical message much more, especially for those who, as Rescher says, yearn for some form of transcendence and some kind of getting over the relativity of values. It seems to me that Lachs's strong reference to a Santayanan-type of spirituality, while seeing it as central for human conscious existence, can meet such expectations. To be sure, Lachs looked to Santayana rather than to Kant to "strengthen" the meaningfulness of the pragmatist understanding of the good life. To some extent, Lachs responds to Rescher's demand, yet he objects to Rescher's positing the mind-independent reality as a precondition of making life meaningful and true (cf. Lachs 2012, 61–72). Instead, he tries to evoke Santayana's idea of aesthetic spirituality which seems to have the potential to meet Rescher's expectations; although it does not refer to the transcendence in the Kantian meaning of this term, it still evokes the "transcendence of everyday life" in the sense of stressing the role of disinterested gazes upon all possible objects and states of affairs within our ordinary experience in order to detect the beauty that can be found there. However, this disinterestedness is not complete; one of the basic profits we can get from this aesthetic spirituality is to make our lives more pregnant with meaning, and it is not so much due to a shallow aestheticism, but rather, as I explain elsewhere (cf. Skowroński 2009, 172–83), due to the complexity of the objects and events we happen to face.

5.4 Kant, Putnam, and Rorty on stimulating an "interminable discussion"

One of the primary aims of contemporary aesthetics is to evoke discussion, provoking interpretations and showing, sometimes shockingly, new angles of view and new ways of seeing things. Aesthetics and aesthetic values are needed in a philosophical narrative because they can be more instrumental in evoking reflection in various audiences, not to mention evoking discussion amongst philosophers themselves. In this context, it would be interesting to take a closer look at H. Putnam's reading of a fragment of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in the following way: "it is part of the *value* of art that it provokes interminable discussion" (Putnam 2015, 679). The fragment to which Putnam refers and, as he claims, is "remarkably little discussed by Kant scholars!" (ibid.) reads:

we add to a concept a representation of the imagination that belongs to its presentation, but which by itself stimulates so much thinking that it can never be grasped in a determinate concept, hence which aesthetically enlarges the concept itself in an unbounded way [...] in this case the imagination is creative, and sets the faculty of intellectual ideas (reason) into motion. Kant 2001 (1790) 5:315

Although without a clear reference to Kant, as in Putnam, I detect a similar tone in Rorty's "The Inspirational Value of Great Works of Literature" (*Achieving Our Country*). Apart from the "recontextualization", "self-transformation", and "evoking social hope", he sees the "stimulating inspiration" as the values that constitute a "great work of literature" (we should not forget that in Rortyan vocabulary this might also refer to what commonly is called "great philosophical books"). This "stimulating inspiration" refers to the audience and to other authors. A great work, or a great text in general, loses its capacity to be "great" when it does not have any impact upon the receivers (and commentators) and leaves them unmoved in their view of the depicted life, as if they had no will to see things from a new and different angle of view. A great work ought to be able to inspire people to various types of pro-social actions, be it in the further development of the idea of the work (promoting it as important), or doing something more for the sake of the message of the great work, among others.

This takes us back to the aesthetic dimension of the ethical messages in the philosophical discourses. If we agree that the term "inspirational", also in the sense of "stimulating an interminable discussion", has most frequently been associated with the aesthetic domain, we have another factor that should, in my view, be, so to say, persuasively visible in the narratives that deal with ethical values.

6. Conclusion

It is difficult for me to present any hierarchy of importance concerning the points enumerated above. Though I start this short summing up with the *via negativa* stimulation, it does not mean that I think it should be given any priority over cinematic philosophy or anything else. Nor do I think by any means that the list of possible points is complete.

Coming back to the *via negativa* stimulation, I suggest that pragmatists, especially the social pragmatists, be attentive to the Kantian philosophy of values. The main point, in my view, is to think why the Kantians

ignore the social dimension of the axiological problem and, even more importantly, at which contexts this type of ignorance has, or can have, the most significant consequences in terms of communication, modes of transmitting axiological message, the target audiences, and many others. The social pragmatists recognize the importance of the relations within particular groups of people for shaping the processes of evaluation, for setting norms, and for generating discourses by means of which the axiological issues can be articulated. If so, I mean if various social groups construct the hierarchies of values and the processes of evaluations in various ways, the social pragmatists should be sensitive not only to these processes but also to the ways of communication about them. Hence, various modes of transmitting the axiological messages should be preceded by the adequate recognition of the communicative practices of the given target audiences. For example, within such communicative practices, given types of images evoke imagination of the members of the given audience in a more persuasive way which means, among other things, that the given message should be communicated in accordance with this practice.

This leads me to another aspect, one indicated in 5.4., which, I think, deserves special attention. Invitation to the “interminable discussion” requires, among other things, breaking through various frontlines and trespassing on other fields of philosophy and culture. Not only does it require discussion with the representatives of different styles of practicing philosophy, but also an interdisciplinary approach and, perhaps the most difficult, reaching audiences that use very different modes of communication. This leads me to cinematic philosophy that I mentioned before (2.) and film (this should include such newest modes as Vlogs, Youtube clips, and similar) as one of the most popular ways of transmitting ideas to large masses of people. I am not thinking exclusively about cinematic philosophy and the role that cinema can play in promoting philosophical thinking. This also includes many forms of the newest technologies within social media.

I would like to conclude my remarks by quoting from Lachs’s *Stoic Pragmatism*. I quote him in the hope that “There is a large public waiting anxiously for what philosophy can offer—for careful thinking, clear vision, and the intelligent examination of our values. That is where the future of philosophy lies” (Lachs 2012, 193).

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